

Message Text

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ACTION SCS-06

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 SSO-00 PPTE-00 CA-01 /022 W
-----102654 311657Z/43

O 302406Z JAN 78
FM AMCONSUL TIJUANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2242
AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL MAZATLAN IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS TIJUANA 0043

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC MX
SUBJ: SOUTHWEST OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL

REF: TIJUANA 0039, STATE 022771

1. FOLLOWING IS REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN BY CONGEN TIJUANA OUTWARD BOUND CASE.

2. AT 1415 HOURS, ON JANUARY 27, 1978, CONGEN TIJUANA RECEIVED TELEPHONE CALL FROM SCOTT VOLSTEDT OF SOUTHWEST OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL. VOLSTEDT SAID THAT THREE OF NINETEEN STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN SEA KAYAK TRAINING COURSE HAD BEEN LOST AT SEA NEAR LORETO, B.C. DURING STORM ON JANUARY 25, 1978. VOLSTEDT WANTED TO KNOW WHAT KIND OF TRAVEL DOCUMENTATION SIXTEEN SURVIVING STUDENTS WOULD NEED TO RE-ENTER U.S. SINCE MANY OF THEIR TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WERE LOST DURING STORM. CONGEN TIJUANA IMMEDIATELY CALLED DEPT (SCS), AMEMBASSY MEXICO AND CONOFF MAZATLAN (LORETO IS IN ITS DISTRICT) AND INFORMED THEM OF INCIDENT. CONOFF MAZATLAN INFORMED CONOFF TIJUANA THAT HE WOULD LEAVE FOR LORETO BY AIR ON MORNING OF JANUARY 28, 1978. CONOFF TIJUANA INFORMED AMEMBASSY MEXICO AND CONOFF MAZATLAN THAT FIXED WING CESSNA 182 PILOTED BY MEMBER OF SAN DIEGO SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT (SEARCH & RESCUE DIVISION) WAS ENROUTE TO LORETO TO PARTICIPATE IN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATION AND WAS SCHEDULED LAND IN LORETO ON JANUARY 28, 1978.

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27, 1978 AT 5 P.M. CONGEN MEXICO CITY INFORMED CONOFF TIJUANA THAT EMBASSY ENDEAVORING OBTAIN CLEARANCE FOR USCG HELICOPTER TO PARTICIPATE IN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATION.

3. ON EVENING JANUARY 27, 1978, CONOFF TIJUANA VISITED HOME OF LOCAL RESIDENT, CONCEPCION FLORES, WHO HAS DIRECT SHORT WAVE CONTACT WITH LORETO. CONOFF SPOKE TO MR. HARRY FRISHMAN, MANAGER

OF RIVIERA DEL MAR TRAILER PARK IN LORETO. FIRSHMAN SAID THAT STUDENTS LEFT MULEGE AT 9 A.M. ON JANUARY 25, 1978, IN TWO GROUPS OF 9 AND 10 STUDENTS EACH WITH ONE TEACHER IN THE SMALLER GROUP AND TWO IN THE LARGER. THE STUDENTS WERE IN THEIR KAYAKS HEADED TOWARD LORETO WHEN A STORM HIT WITH 30 KNOT WINDS AND 15 FOOT WAVES. ALL KAYAKS CAPSIZED. STUDENTS RAFTED THE KAYAKS TOGETHER FOR ONE OR TWO HOURS BUT FORCE OF WAVES BROKE UP THE RAFTS. SIX STUDENTS REPORTEDLY HELD ONTO ONE KAYAK FOR 12 TO 14 HOURS. ONE STUDENT IN GROUP OF SIX, TIM BERDIGAN, WAS ASSISTED BY OTHER FIVE STUDENTS TO HOLD ON TO KAYAK BUT HE LOST STRENGTH AND DROWNED. THE OTHER FIVE STUDENTS MADE IT TO SHORE. THREE OTHER STUDENTS WERE SEPARATED FROM THE GROUP, ONE IN A SINGLE MAN KAYAK AND TWO, BRENDA HERMAN AND DAVID SCHWIMMER, IN A TWO-MAN KAYAK. THE STUDENT IN THE SINGLE MAN KAYAK WAS FOUND BUT THE TWO IN THE TWO-MAN KAYAK WERE NOT LOCATED. THEIR KAYAK WAS FOUND LATER ON THE BEACH BY MEXICAN AUTHORITIES. FRISHMAN SAID THAT ON JANUARY 28, 1978, TWO AMERICAN PHYSICIANS FROM SOUTHWEST OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL WERE ARRIVING TO EXAMINE AND ASSIST STUDENTS. THE STUDENTS WERE TO REMAIN IN LORETO FOR ABOUT TWO DAYS, WHILE THEY RESTED AND MADE STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE INCIDENT. THE STUDENTS STAYED IN LORETO AT THE HOTEL PRESIDENTE OR CAMPED OUT AT THE RIVIERA DEL MAR TRAILER PARK. FRISHMAN SAID THAT SOME STUDENTS WOULD LEAVE LORETO BY BUS VIA TIJUANA AND OTHERS WOULD FLY OUT OF LA PAZ FOR RETURN TO U.S. CONOFF TIJUANA TOLD FRISHMAN THAT INS INFORMED US STUDENTS COULD RE-ENTER U.S. WITHOUT TRAVEL DOCUMENTS. CONOFF TIJUANA ALSO TOLD FRISHMAN THAT CONOFF MAZATLAN WOULD BE ARRIVING

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ING LORETO ON JANUARY 28, 1978 TO RENDER ASSISTANCE. FRISHMAN VOICED THANKS FOR OUR HELP. FRISHMAN STATED THAT ALL STUDENTS HAD ADEQUATE FUNDS TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR WELFARE DURING STAY IN LORETO AND FOR RETURN TO U.S. CONOFF TIJUANA ASKED FRISHMAN FOR CONFIRMATION THAT MEXICAN HELICOPTER WAS PARTICIPATING IN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATION. FRISHMAN REPLIED THAT HE HEARD MEXICAN HELICOPTER WAS ASSISTING IN SEARCH BUT COULD NOT CONFIRM INFO.

4. ON EVENING OF JANUARY 27, 1978, CONOFF TIJUANA PASSED ALL ABOVE INFO TO DEPT (SCS), AMEMBASSY MEXICO, CONOFF MAZATLAN, U.S.C.G., LONG BEACH AND SOUTHWEST OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL.
5. AT 0900 HOURS ON JANUARY 28, 1978, MRS. FLORES INFORMED CONOFF TIJUANA THAT TWO BODIES, TIM BERDIGAN AND BRENDA HERMAN, WERE FOUND. SHE ADDED THAT DAVID SCHWIMMER HAD NOT YET BEEN LOCATED. CONOFF CALLED U.S.C.G. AND CONFIRMED THAT U.S.C.G. HELICOPTER WAS ENROUTE TO LORETO. CONOFF TIJUANA CALLED DEPT (SCS), AMCONSUL MAZATLAN, AMEMBASSY MEXICO AND SOUTHWEST OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL. LATTER TOLD US THAT THEY PREFERRED CONOFF NOT SPEAK TO PRESS ABOUT INCIDENT.

6. AT 1000 HOURS ON JANUARY 31, 1978, CONOFF TIJUANA SPOKE AGAIN

WITH MRS. FLORES WHO REPORTED THAT DAVID SCHWIMMER HAD NOT YET
BEEN LOCATED BUT U.S.C.G. HELICOPTER WAS CONTINUING SEARCH.

7. CONGEN TIJUANA WILL CONTINUE REPORT ON CASE AS REQUIRED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TIJUAN00043
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780046-0360
Format: TEL
From: TIJUANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978016/aaaaafaa.tel
Line Count: 121
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 539363e3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SCS
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 TIJUANA 39, 78 STATE 22771
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 feb 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3769597
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOUTHWEST OUTWARD BOUND SCHOOL
TAGS: CASC, MX
To: STATE MEXICO
Type: TE
vdkgvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/539363e3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014